

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### TWO SENTENCED FOR ILLEGAL BIRD TRAFFICKING

Two exotic bird dealers in California have been sentenced to a total of 18 months in jail, 10 years probation, and \$7,500 in fines by U.S. District Court Judge Howard B. Turrentine of San Diego for two separate violations involving the receipt of smuggled parrots from Mexico and the sale of migratory birds.

The parrots were the two types known as half moons and lilac-crowned, both popular and expensive items in the pet trade. Lilac-crowned parrots, also known by a number of other names, bring up to \$125 each.

Seventy-three parrots of these species were found in paper bags stuffed inside door panels of a vehicle which crossed the Tijauna-San Diego border. Agents of the U.S. Customs Service discovered the birds in a search on October 12, 1977. With the cooperation of the driver, against whom charges were later dismissed, the parrots were delivered to their original destination--an exotic bird business known as Basically Birds of Alpine, California. The company is owned by William Hampton, 35, and Marion Martinez, 41, both of Alpine.

After receipt of delivery, the birds were seized by agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Customs Services and were turned over to officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The birds were subsequently destroyed as a precautionary measure to preclude the introduction of avian diseases since they had not passed through quarantine.

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At the time of the violation, Hampton and Martinez were awaiting sentencing on a previous charge of selling migratory birds on February 2, 1977, to another bird dealer in Colton, California. The birds, four San Blas jays, are native to Mexico and the Southwestern United States. It is illegal to sell any migratory bird under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Hampton and Martinez were sentenced on March 28 for both violations. Each pleaded nolo contendere to a charge of receiving, concealing, and facilitating the transportation and concealment of the 73 birds. Hampton was fined \$5,000 and sentenced to 5 years probation. Martinez was fined \$2,500 and also put on probation for 5 years. Charges were dropped against Martinez for the February 2 sale of migratory birds, but Hampton, who pleaded guilty was given an 18-month jail sentence along with another 5-year probation, to run consecutively with the first probation term.

The problem of the smuggling of live birds into the United States has become particularly acute in the last few years because of severe outbreaks of exotic Newcastles disease in both the pet bird industry and poultry industry. Control and eradication of this disease has cost the taxpayers millions of dollars and has had a severe impact on the poultry industry. The Fish and Wildlife Service has been devoting increasing amounts of time in cooperative investigation of the live bird trade with the U.S. Customs Service and foreign governments, particularly Mexico.

Many of the birds in the pet trade can legally be brought into the country through U.S. Department of Agriculture quarantine facilities. However, birds are often smuggled because of the additional expense of quarantining and because of restrictions in the foreign countries where export permits are sometimes difficult to obtain.

Newcastles disease is a highly contagious virus which affects almost all species of birds. The only known method of control is to eradicate the infected flock.

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